

Military And Veterans Health Coordinating Board

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 5, 2001

Military and Veterans Health Board Expands Role

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Secretaries of Defense, Health and Human Services, and Veterans Affairs today announced the completed expansion of the Military and Veterans Health Coordinating Board (MVHCB) to its new, broader mission.



Department of Defense



*Department of
Veterans Affairs*



*Department of Health
and Human Services*

The board oversees an interagency team working to protect the health of service members, veterans and their families. The MVHCB will build upon the success of the Persian Gulf Veterans Coordinating Board and health-related lessons learned from past deployments while continuing efforts to find answers to the concerns of Gulf War veterans.

The board, established by presidential directive and co-chaired by the three department secretaries, is an outgrowth of the Persian Gulf Board. Incorporating the missions of both boards, it now addresses health concerns of current as well as past members of the U.S. Armed Forces, including the Reserves and National Guard. It also coordinates deployment health and research, as well as outreach and health risk communication to military personnel and veterans. In addition, a special task force will ensure Department of Defense and VA information systems are compatible.

“Expanding the board’s role will help us more efficiently track deployment- related health issues, including Gulf War illnesses, now and in the future,” said Dr. Robert Claypool, Executive Director of the MVHCB.

The federal government has spent about \$155 million on 190 different research projects with nearly 60 percent of them still underway. Most of this effort involves Gulf War illnesses, with the remainder directed toward protecting the health of servicemen and women during future deployments.

“Our goal is to respond promptly and effectively to the health needs of our military members, veterans and their families, especially when we find problems following a military deployment,” explained Dr. Thomas L. Garthwaite, VA Under Secretary for Health.

The U.S. military has already applied many of the lessons learned from the Gulf experience to deployments to Haiti, Rwanda, Somalia, Bosnia and now Kosovo.

“Protecting the health of our military forces is a national obligation. Americans who defend the vital interests of our nation deserve accurate health information and the finest medical care and preventive measures available to protect their health, wherever they serve,” said Dr. Jarrett Clinton, Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs.

An advisory committee will ensure the working groups receive input from multiple sources, including veterans, to help guide researchers, staff members and the executive steering committee.

The board will report its annual progress to the Assistants to the President for Science and Technology and for National Security. It expects to make its first report early in 2001. The board will also assume the responsibility of the Gulf Board to assemble and distribute an annual report to Congress on the status of Gulf War illnesses research.

#

Press Contact:

Jim Benson, VA Office of Public Affairs (202) 273-6000